United Nations A/C.3/52/SR.24

General Assembly
Fifty-second session

Official Records

Distr.: General
13 February 1998
English
Original: Spanish

Third Committee

Summary record of the 24th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 3 November 1997, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Busacca ..... (Italy)

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97-82472 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 102: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family *(continued)* (A/C.3/52/L.11/Rev.1)

Draft resolution A/C.3/52/L.11/Rev.1

1. **Ms. Nyamsuren** (Mongolia) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/52/L.11/Rev.1, entitled "Education for all", on behalf of its sponsors. After pointing out the changes already incorporated in the revised draft, she said that Cuba, Denmark, India, Mauritania, the Republic of Korea and Venezuela had become sponsors and expressed the hope that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

Agenda Item 103: Crime prevention and criminal justice *(continued)* (A/C.3/52/L.22 and A/C.3/52/L.23)

Draft resolution A/C.3/52/L.22

2. **Mr. Adawa** (Kenya), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, introduced draft resolution A/C.3/52/L.22, entitled "United Nations African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders", referred briefly to the content of the draft and expressed the hope that the Committee would adopt it by consensus.

Draft resolution A/C.3/52/L.23

3. **Mr. Baratolo** (Italy) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/52/L.23, entitled "Strengthening the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, particularly its technical cooperation capacity" on behalf of its sponsors and announced that Argentina, Australia, Canada, France, Greece, the Republic of Moldova, San Marino and South Africa had become sponsors of the draft resolution. He said that Member States had clearly indicated their support for United Nations crime prevention activities by including them among the priorities of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. Moreover, the danger of transnational organized crime had been recognized at the highest political level and had been referred to in many statements at the opening of the current session of the General Assembly. The sponsors welcomed the Secretary-General's initiatives to strengthen the activities of the Centre for International Crime Prevention and pointed out that one of the objectives of the draft resolution was to contribute to increasing the resources earmarked for crime prevention programmes. He referred specifically to paragraph 9 of the draft resolution and expressed the hope that the Committee would adopt the draft by consensus.

Agenda Item 104: International drug control *(continued)* (A/C.3/52/L.14 and Corr.1)

Draft resolution A/C.3/52/L.14 and Corr.1.

4. **Mr. Albin** (Mexico) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/52/L.14 and Corr.1, entitled "International action to combat the drug abuse and illicit production and trafficking" on behalf of the sponsors and said that Albania, Armenia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Georgia, Guyana, Haiti, Iceland, Israel, Monaco, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, San Marino, Singapore and Uzbekistan had become sponsors of the draft resolution. The fact that the draft was sponsored by countries from all geographical regions was evidence of the global scale of the drug problem and of the international community's commitment to solving it. After briefly reviewing the content of the draft, he expressed the hope that it would be adopted by consensus.

Agenda item 105: Advancement of women *(continued)* (A/C.3/52/L.18, A/C.3/52/L.20, Rev.1, A/C.3/52/L.21, A/C.3/52/L.17 and A/C.3/52/L.19)

Agenda item 106: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women *(continued)* (A/C.3/52/L.17)

Draft resolution A/C.3/52/L.18)

5. **Mr. Giroux** (Canada), speaking also on behalf of Australia and New Zealand, introduced draft resolution A/C.3/52/L.18, entitled "Improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat". A new paragraph had been inserted after the second preambular paragraph, to read: "*Recalling also* its resolutions 51/67 of 12 December 1996 and 51/226 C of 3 April 1997 concerning the status of women in the Secretariat". In addition, in paragraph 2, the words "the lack of representation or underrepresentation of certain countries, including developing countries and countries with economies in transition" had been replaced by "the lack of representation or underrepresentation of women of certain countries, in particular developing countries and countries with economies in transition". He announced that Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Fiji, Germany, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Mongolia, Mozambique, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Poland, Republic of Korea, Samoa, San Marino, Singapore, Sudan, Swaziland, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United Republic of Tanzania had become sponsors of the

draft resolution. He said that paragraph 5 was one of the new elements of the draft, which he hoped would be adopted by consensus.

Draft resolution A/C.3/52/L.20/Rev.1

6. **Ms. David** (Philippines) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/52/L.20/Rev.1 entitled "Traffic in women and girls" on behalf of the sponsors. The sponsors were convinced that dealing with the problem of traffic in women and girls called for the continuous cooperation of the international community and the ongoing assistance of the United Nations, particularly in gathering data necessary for the formulation of effective strategies at all levels. She announced that Burkina Faso, France, Guatemala, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and Ukraine had become sponsors of the draft resolution which, it was hoped, would be adopted by consensus.

Draft resolution A/C.3/52/L.21

7. **Mr. Ramaker** (Netherlands) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/52/L.21 entitled "Traditional or customary practices affecting the health of women and girls" on behalf of the sponsors and announced that Argentina, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cuba, Cyprus, Ethiopia, India, Japan, Monaco, Mozambique, Panama, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Swaziland and the United States of America had become sponsors of the draft resolution.

8. Norms of care and behaviour based on age, gender and life stage existed in every society and were often referred to as traditional practices. Some of them were harmless or even beneficial, but those relating to female children, marriage and sexuality often had harmful effects on women and girls. Female genital mutilation was one deeply rooted and widespread traditional practice that had severe health consequences for women and girls. The international community must act without delay and spare no efforts to eliminate that practice by adopting the measures proposed in the draft resolution.

9. The elimination of traditional practices adversely affecting the health of women and girls, in particular female genital mutilation, would be an important step towards the improvement of women's status and health, as well as towards the international community's overriding goals of gender equality and the empowerment of women. It was therefore gratifying that countries in very different parts of the world had sponsored the draft resolution and supported it at all stages. It was to be hoped that the adoption of the draft resolution would mark the beginning of a process which could achieve concrete results only by consistent actions aimed at the implementation of the draft resolution. The Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights should hold substantive discussions in that regard and activities undertaken at field level should be strengthened with every possible assistance from the international community.

Draft resolution A/C.3/52/L.17

10. **The Chairman** drew the Committee's attention to draft resolution A/C.3/52/L.17 entitled "International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women", and announced that Israel, Liberia and Malawi had become sponsors. The draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

11. *Draft resolution A/C.3/52/L.17 was adopted without a vote.*

Draft resolution A/C.3/52/L.19

12. **The Chairman** drew the Committee's attention to draft resolution A/C.3/52/L.19, entitled "Violence against women migrant workers" and announced that Israel, Liberia, Malawi, Morocco, Netherlands, Pakistan and Uruguay had become sponsors. The draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

13. **Ms. Newell** (Secretary of the Committee) read out the amendments made orally to the draft resolution. In the seventh preambular paragraph, "underlining" should be replaced by "recognizing". In paragraph 3, "in particular" should be inserted after "workers", "including" should be deleted and "the" should be inserted before "innovative".

14. *Draft resolution A/C.3/52/L.19, as orally amended, was adopted without a vote.*

Agenda item 107: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions *(continued)* (A/52/12 and Add.1, A/52/273, A/52/274 and Corr.1, A/52/360, A/52/97 and A/52/116-S/1997/37)

15. **Mr. Erwa** (Sudan) said that his country, which was a party to all international and regional instruments for the promotion and protection of refugees, had for many years been accepting refugees from neighbouring countries; they now numbered about half a million. They were provided with every possible assistance and offered the opportunity to return home voluntarily. The international community must assume part of that burden, and it was very worrying that resources allocated to refugees in Sudan had been

reduced significantly in recent years, to the point where they covered only 30 per cent of the costs. Budgetary appropriations for the programmes of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Sudan were not in proportion to the number of refugees there, when compared with appropriations for other States.

16. The continued presence of more than half a million refugees in the Sudan for 30 years had had direct repercussions on ecosystems and natural resources, as well as on the political and security situation. In Sudan, refugees did not live in refugee camps and therefore did not qualify for international assistance. UNHCR must therefore conduct a census of refugees who had settled in various parts of the country. In many cases, projects for the rehabilitation of affected areas submitted to donor countries and to UNHCR were rejected without any explanation, although the motive seemed to be political. Sudan's view was that humanitarian and political considerations should not be mixed and called on donor countries which had reduced their assistance and rehabilitation programmes to resume their activities and honour the commitments of earlier programmes. In that connection, he drew attention to the assistance provided by the European Union.

17. Voluntary repatriation was the key to the solution of the refugee problem. Sudan had concluded tripartite agreements with UNHCR and a number of neighbouring countries, including Ethiopia, Chad and Eritrea. In the last-mentioned case, Eritrea must honour the agreements and accept a number of its nationals who had endured three years of exile. In that connection, Sudan appealed to the international community to convene a conference of all countries in the Horn of Africa region in order to arrive at a general framework agreement for the voluntary repatriation of refugees. Sudan would be prepared to host or participate in such a conference.

18. Sudan had always been solicitous of its own citizens who had taken refuge in neighbouring States as a result of an unjust war imposed on the country for more than 13 years. The international community must give the Sudanese refugees the assistance and protection they needed and ensure that the countries concerned allowed the Sudanese authorities to visit their camps and monitor their condition. One of the Sudan's efforts to repatriate its refugees had been an agreement signed with the Central African Republic, under which 540 of them would return to their homes.

19. One of the most unfortunate consequences of armed conflict was the phenomenon of unaccompanied refugee minors, because minors, and especially girls, were particularly vulnerable. The rights of such children were trampled upon constantly: they were being conscripted as soldiers, used as human shields and subjected to rape and attacks upon their dignity. Sudan wanted to see peace restored also in order to put an end to odious practices such as the kidnapping of children by the rebel movement. Sudan would be submitting a draft resolution during the current session aimed at providing assistance to unaccompanied minors and hoped that all delegations would support it.

20. His Government was doing everything possible to eliminate the causes that had prompted Sudanese citizens to take refuge outside the country and was determined to implement the voluntary repatriation programmes being carried out in conjunction with UNHCR and the countries concerned. Accordingly, its signing of the Khartoum Peace Agreement, which had failed to include only one of the parties, had brought stability to much of the southern part of the country and had established a favourable climate for the voluntary repatriation of many refugees. In order to resolve the problem in the south completely and to establish conditions of stability and prosperity, his Government was currently negotiating with the party that had not yet endorsed the Agreement.

21. **Ms. Kapalata** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made on the item under consideration by Botswana on behalf of the 14 Southern African Development Community countries. The report of the High Commissioner (A/52/12) was commendable, although it did not sufficiently acknowledge the important contribution the countries of origin and of asylum, especially the latter, had made to the work done by UNHCR to resolve the problem of refugees and displaced persons. The decrease in the world's refugee population in 1996 reported by the High Commissioner could be explained in part by the establishment of a climate conducive to voluntary repatriation, an option which her Government had always advocated as the right of refugees.

22. Even as Rwandan refugees were being repatriated, events had unfolded in eastern Zaire and Burundi, precipitating new flows of refugees into the United Republic of Tanzania. At the height of hostilities in eastern Zaire, in November 1996, her country had been compelled to receive refugees from the former Zaire at the rate of 1,000 per day. By June 1997, the United Republic of Tanzania was hosting, among others, about 74,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the wake of the improvement of the political situation there, that Government and her Government and UNHCR had on 21 August 1997 signed a tripartite agreement for the voluntary repatriation of Congolese refugees. The operation, begun on 1 September

1997, had by mid-September succeeded in repatriating 1,700 of the 20,000 refugees who had volunteered to return.

23. In recent years there had been a disquieting erosion of the regime of asylum, both in the developed North, where xenophobia had exacerbated the problem, and in the South, where "compassion fatigue" was now emerging. The United Republic of Tanzania had hosted refugees since its independence, even though that had been done at great sacrifice, with limited resources and inadequate international assistance. It could not, however, shoulder that burden indefinitely. The massive influxes of refugees into her country had put an enormous strain on the economy and the environment and created social tensions. Nevertheless, her Government had sought to alleviate the sufferings of the refugees with the help of UNHCR, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and non-governmental organizations. In order to safeguard the regime of asylum, the international community must share the burden borne by the asylum countries, give greater emphasis to the right of refugees to return voluntarily to their countries as soon as possible, and provide assistance to the countries of origin so that they could attack the root causes of the cyclical problem of refugees. That strategy was predicated on the direct involvement of UNHCR in the resettlement programmes and the commitment of the countries of origin to negotiations aimed at reaching political accommodations and promoting a respect for human rights.

24. **Mr. Otuyelu** (Nigeria) observed that, despite the decrease in the number of refugees from 14.5 million to 13.2 million in 1996 and the voluntary repatriation of 3.2 million, unstable conditions in some parts of the world, notably in the Great Lakes region, the Congo and Sierra Leone in Africa, and in Afghanistan and elsewhere in Central Asia, remained disturbing. His delegation welcomed the successful conclusion of the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees, the strengthening of emergency preparedness and the improvement of UNHCR response capacity. The report of the Secretary-General on assistance to unaccompanied refugee minors (A/52/273) showed that the problem was specially serious in the Great Lakes region, as had been brought out also in the report of the expert of the Secretary-General on the impact of armed conflict on children (A/51/306). Those children were scarred for life by the physical and mental abuse to which they were subjected. His delegation therefore supported the idea that the United Nations system, in partnership with Member States and non-governmental organizations, should continue to develop practical approaches to giving refugee minors the necessary protection and assistance and guaranteeing their reintegration. It was pleased to note the cooperation between UNHCR, UNICEF and non-governmental organizations, especially in training activities for officials responsible for identifying the families of refugee minors and caring for the children. It also noted the collaboration of institutions such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Save the Children, Radda Barnan, Food for the Hungry International with UNHCR and UNICEF; the production of an emergency kit for unaccompanied minors by UNHCR and UNICEF; and the signing of agreements between UNHCR and many subregional and international non-governmental organizations for the provision of assistance to unaccompanied minors in emergency situations.

25. Although UNHCR had succeeded in reuniting many refugee minors with their families in the Great Lakes region, the international community must further the reintegration of those children. It must also compensate for the maltreatment of refugee minors, including sexual exploitation of unaccompanied minors and military conscription of refugee children and adolescents in conflict zones. However, the most important thing was to try to eliminate the major causes of the refugee problem, because only thus would the number of refugee minors be reduced and their abuse halted. Economic, social and political factors must be addressed, a culture of peace and tolerance promoted, poverty elimination programmes supported and employment opportunities enhanced. The international community must accordingly provide the necessary funding for UNHCR and other organizations so that they could serve the needs of refugees and displaced persons worldwide.

26. **Ms. Eshmambetova** (Kyrgyzstan) said that, as long as conflicts persisted, there would be huge refugee outflows. The tragedy in the Great Lakes region had resulted in hundreds of thousands of refugees, and the unstable situation in Afghanistan impeded the voluntary return of refugees from that country. Moreover, the signature of the agreement on Tajikistan and Chechnya could facilitate the return of refugees from those regions, and the repatriation of refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was proceeding smoothly, had enabled UNHCR to gear its activities to their social reintegration. Nonetheless, the refugee problem would not be resolved unless its root causes were eliminated; in other words, unless there was an end to the conflicts. In that connection, UNHCR was to be commended for its efforts to promote tolerance and respect for human rights and ethnic minorities.

27. Within the framework of the conflict prevention activities recommended in the Programme of Action adopted by the Conference of the Commonweal.h of Independent States, two UNHCR offices had been established in

Kyrgyzstan, and a project to develop textbooks on ethnic tolerance, the first of which was being used in the country's schools in 1996, had become operational. Kyrgyzstan had acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol and had made a commitment to assist refugees from Tajikistan under a tripartite agreement signed with Tajikistan and UNHCR. Additionally, before the end of the year, the Kyrgyz Parliament would enact legislation on refugees and emigration that would replace provisional legislation governing their presence in the country. Within the framework of another tripartite agreement signed by Kyrgyzstan, the International Labour Organization and UNHCR, a centre for the study of refugee and immigration issues had been established and various seminars had been organized under its auspices. A working session had also been held with the participation of representatives of the Governments, UNHCR and United Nations agencies in the five republics of Central Asia. In addition to carrying out public consciousness-building activities and promoting the adoption of laws, UNHCR was assisting refugees from Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Chechnya and helping to ensure their social reintegration. To that end, an employment programme for refugees had been designed, which provided financial assistance to employers and granted loans to refugees establishing their own businesses. Her Government commended the results achieved by UNHCR, thanks to the selflessness of its staff and its collaboration with ILO, the Red Cross, UNDP and non-governmental organizations.

28. **Mr. Perinat** (Observer for the Sovereign Military Order of Malta) said that the Order of Malta, an ancient institution founded to minister to the sick and needy, currently provided, through its individual multinational agencies and organizations, humanitarian assistance to the sick and to the victims of war, forced expatriation and natural and other disasters, irrespective of their race, nationality or religion. It had associate members in 40 countries and diplomatic missions in 75 States; it provided assistance in approximately 100 countries; it had an estimated 11,000 members and 70,000 permanent volunteers; it received funds amounting to over $1 million from donors, and provided assistance to approximately 15 million persons. The Order maintained 16 hospitals, 33 clinics and many dispensaries; it ran programmes to combat endemic disease, hospices for the terminally ill, residences for the elderly and disabled, workshops for the handicapped, child care centres, drug rehabilitation centres and refugee assistance establishments in five continents, but mainly in the developing regions or countries. It also provided training to volunteers who administered first aid in refugee camps.

29. In recent years, the Order had cooperated with various United Nations agencies, namely, the World Health Organization (WHO), in combating leprosy and in providing medical care to United Nations military observers as well as cooperating with UNHCR. The Order's subsidiary organizations would benefit from greater cooperation between UNHCR and the European Union. The Order was prepared to cooperate with UNHCR in formulating a joint strategy for achieving common humanitarian goals and would follow up UNHCR activities more closely and more effectively since it would be participating in the working meetings of its Standing Committee in future. Lastly, the United Nations should explore the possibility of protecting those Order of Malta staff and centres that cared for the sick in conflict zones.

30. **Mr. Ndaruzaniye** (Burundi) highlighted the situation caused by the presence of armed refugees among the refugees living in the camps in the Great Lakes region. The situation would be completely out of control unless the international community responded urgently to the appeal by UNHCR to separate the two groups. The political and military activism of the armed refugees not only jeopardized the security of the host countries but also undermined the confidence of States and refugees in the humanitarian activities of UNHCR and of the international community. UNHCR and the host countries must therefore apply all the measures set forth in the conventions on refugees with a view to controlling and organizing the refugee camps so as not to become responsible for the problems created by armed refugees who operated with impunity in the camps. The fact that the armed refugees were diverting humanitarian assistance for military purposes in those enormous camps would ultimately be seen as an act of complicity unless UNHCR and the host countries succeeded in separating the two refugee groups and ensuring that humanitarian assistance actually reached those in need.

31. His Government supported the programme of assistance to unaccompanied refugee minors, who represented the most vulnerable social group among the refugees. Both the Government and the people of Burundi thanked the international community for the assistance it had provided to the refugees from their country. The Government would do its utmost to implement the international agreements on refugees and create favourable conditions for the voluntary return of all Burundi refugees. He therefore urged UNHCR to make every effort to encourage or facilitate their repatriation. Thanks to the goodwill of the Government and their confidence in the peace process over 215,000 persons had returned to the country between July 1996 and October 1997, according to UNHCR records, in

addition to many others who were not included in the records.

32. He expressed his delegation's appreciation for the assistance UNDP had provided to Burundi in establishing a database and an information system on refugees, returnees and displaced persons. He also stressed the humanitarian need to provide immediate assistance to those persons who were at risk in their own countries. His Government intended to ensure that those persons who had been forcibly displaced could return to their land; to that end, he appealed for the support of Burundi's usual partners in implementing a national programme of reconstruction and social reintegration of all returnees, displaced and dispersed persons in host families throughout the country.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.